

February 18, 1930

Pluto discovered by Clyde Tombaugh. It was the first planet discovered by an American. Tombaugh was hired to search for proof of theories of another planet beyond Uranus.

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010



Clyde Tombaugh

Photo from NASA

1930

1940

1950

1950s

Gerard Kuiper suggested that Pluto isn't alone, but is the brightest of a collection of objects orbiting beyond Neptune. The Kuiper Belt is named after him.

1960

1970

1980

1990

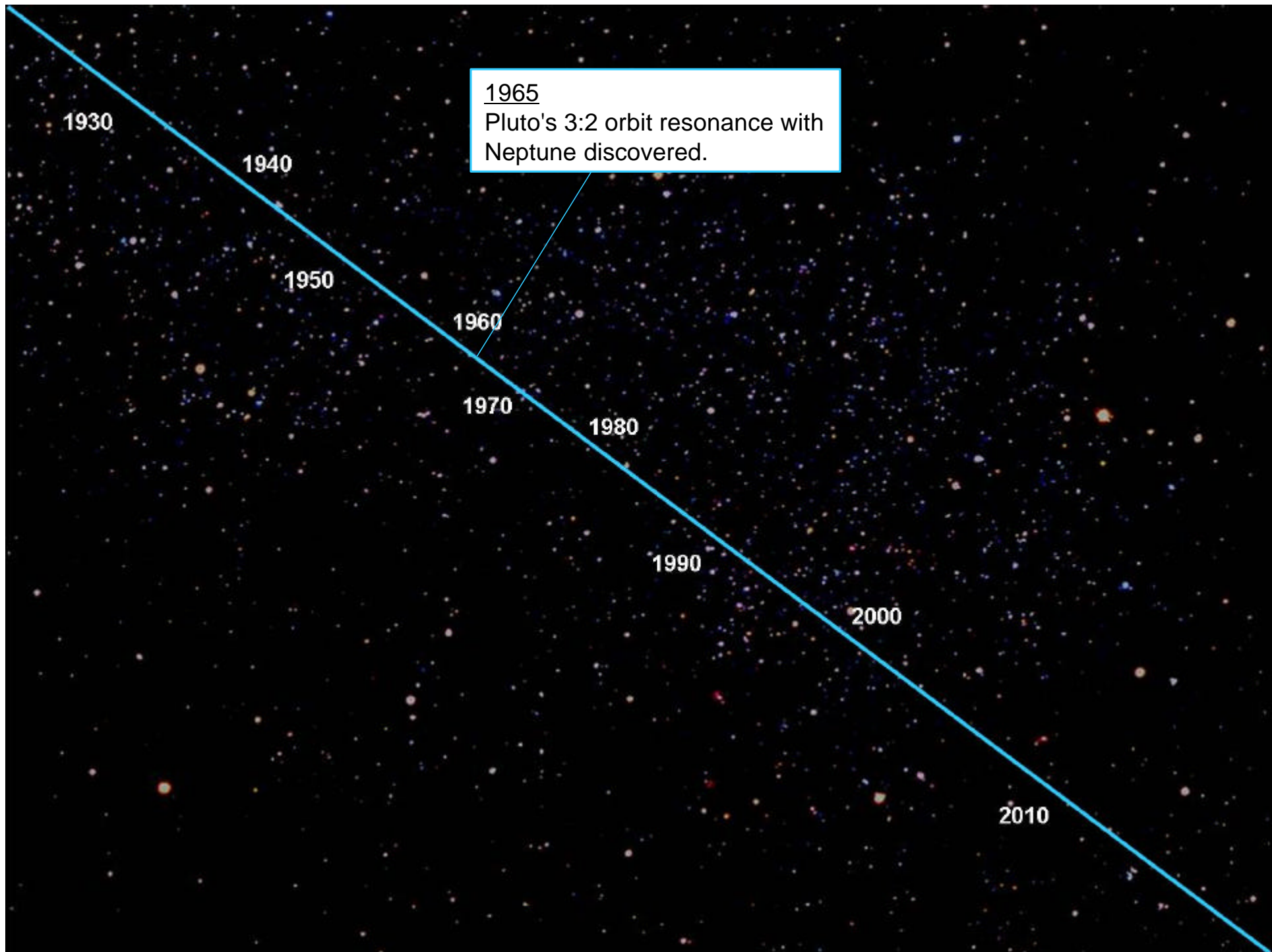
2000

2010



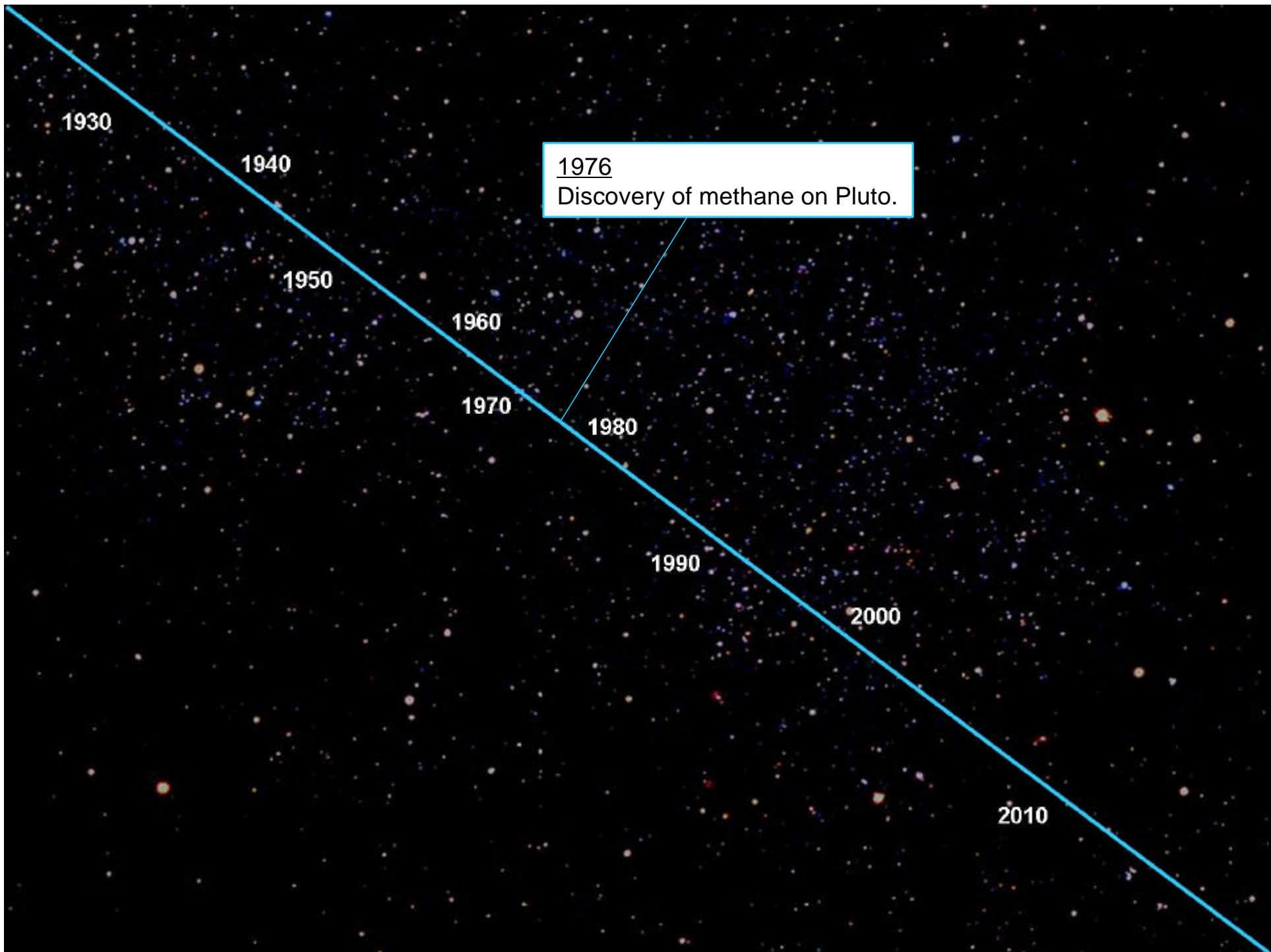
Gerard Kuiper

Photo from NASA



1965

Pluto's 3:2 orbit resonance with Neptune discovered.



1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

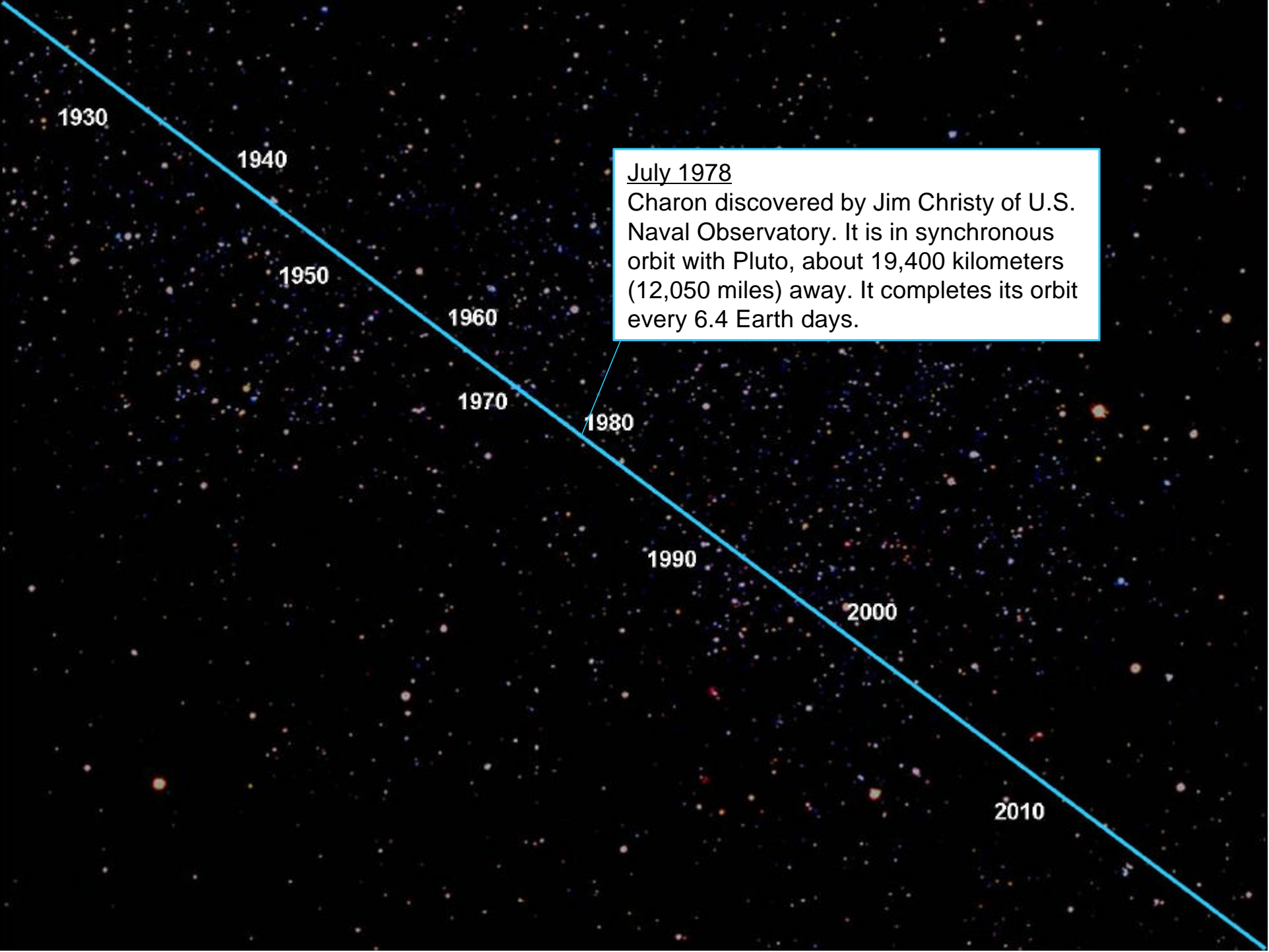
1990

2000

2010

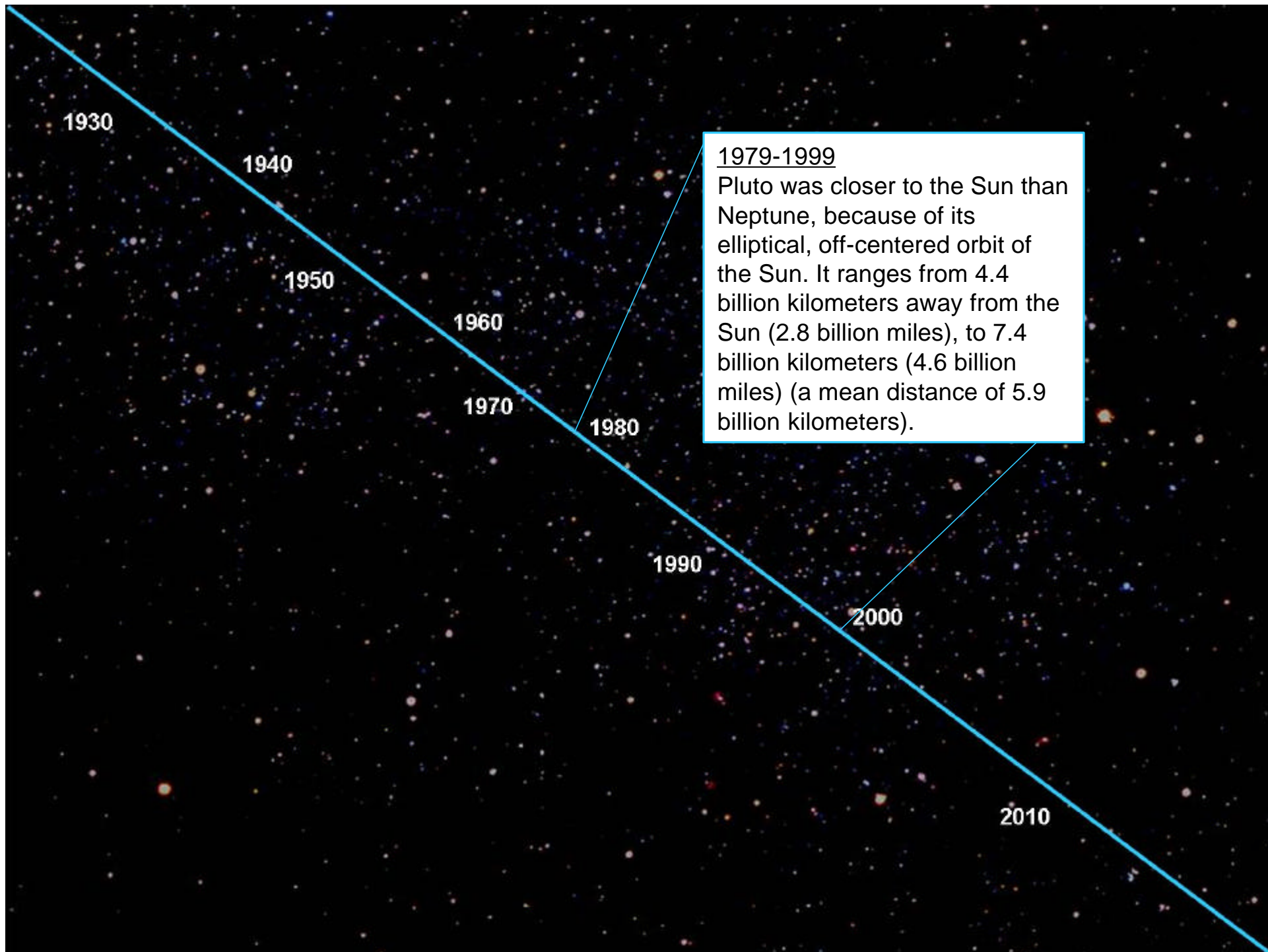
1976

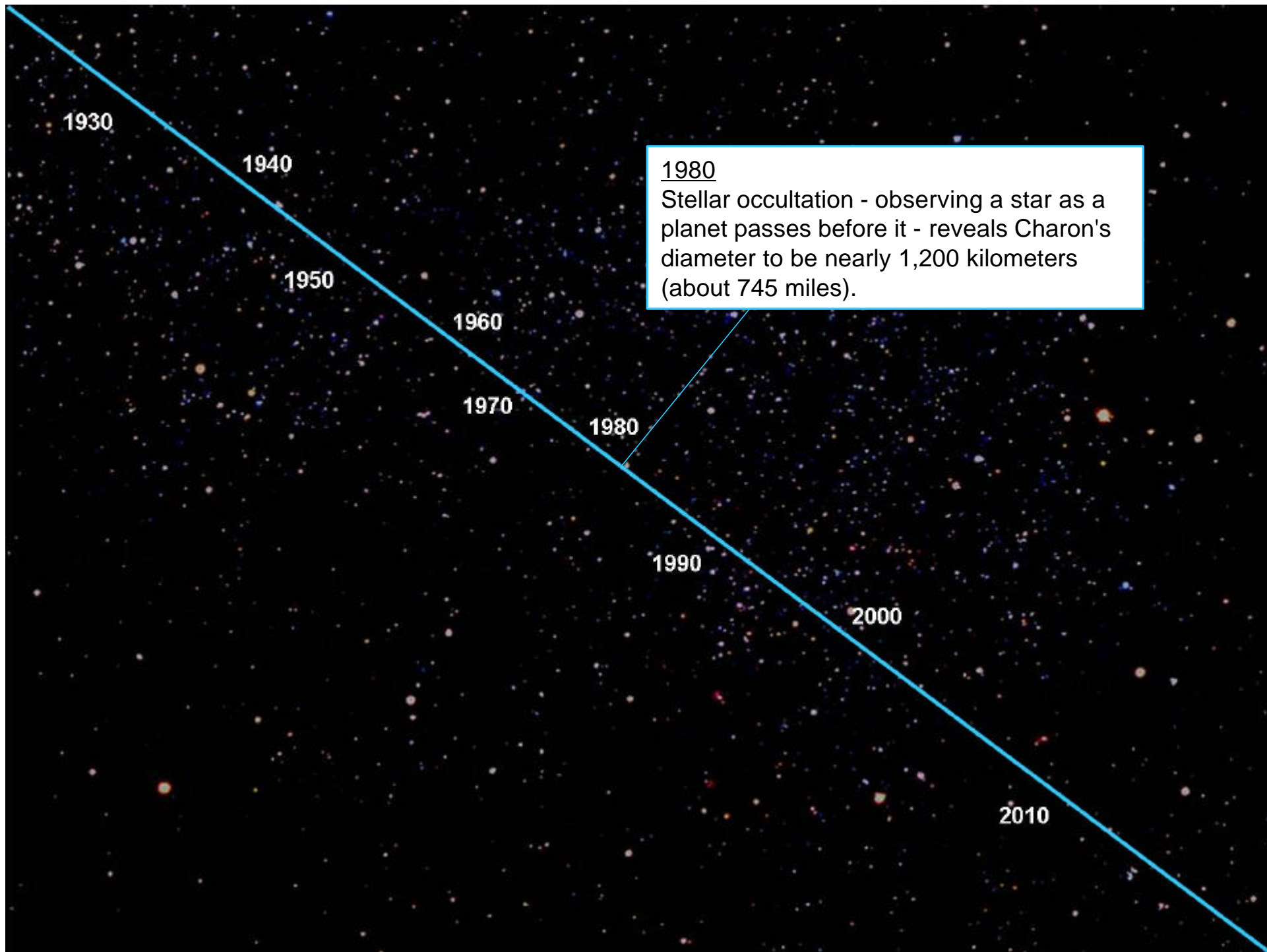
Discovery of methane on Pluto.

A deep space photograph showing a dense field of stars of various colors (white, yellow, orange, red, blue) against a black background. A bright cyan line runs diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. Along this line, the years 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 are labeled in white. A white text box with a cyan border is positioned near the 1980 label, with a thin cyan line pointing from the box to the year label.

July 1978

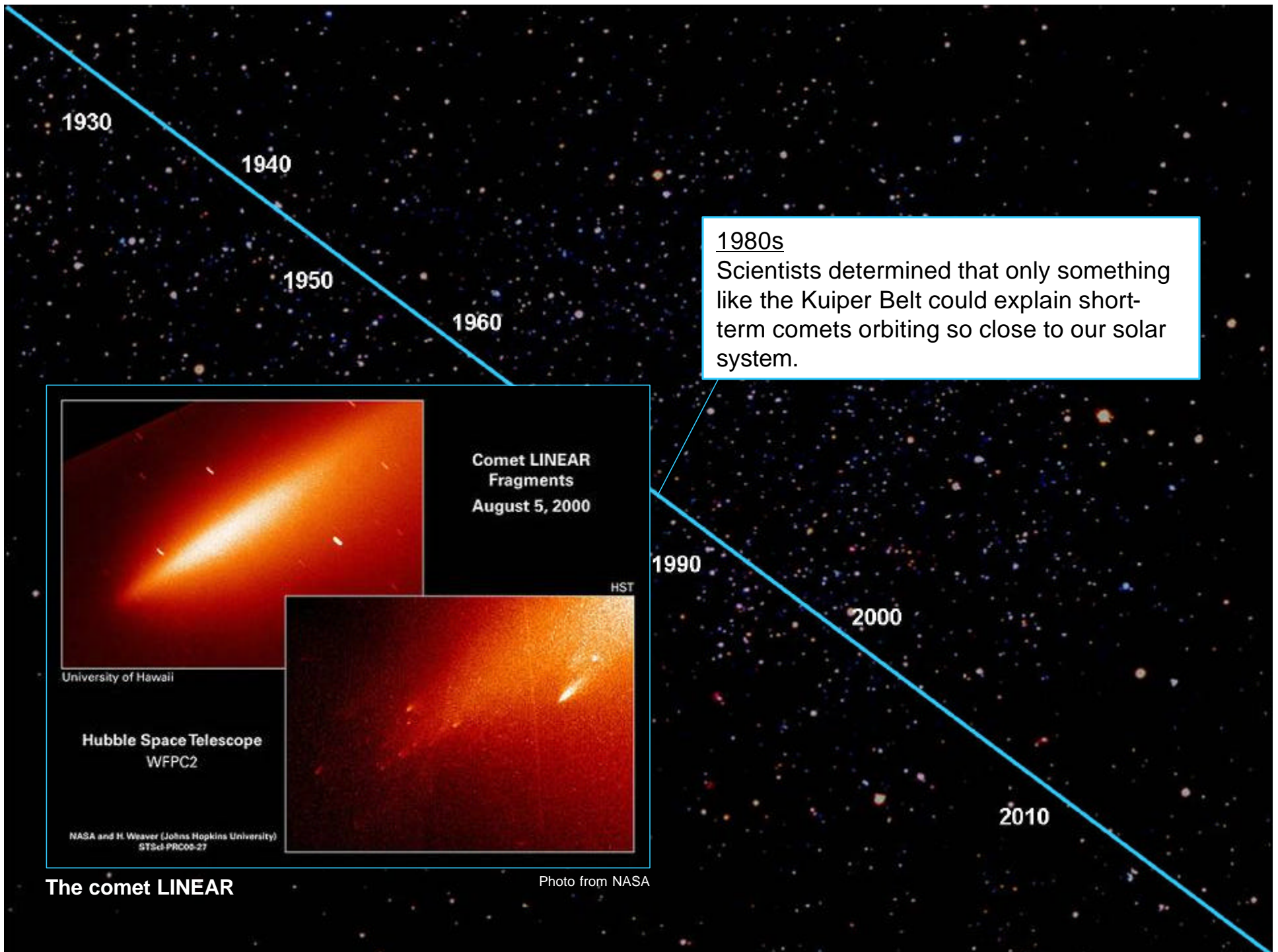
Charon discovered by Jim Christy of U.S. Naval Observatory. It is in synchronous orbit with Pluto, about 19,400 kilometers (12,050 miles) away. It completes its orbit every 6.4 Earth days.





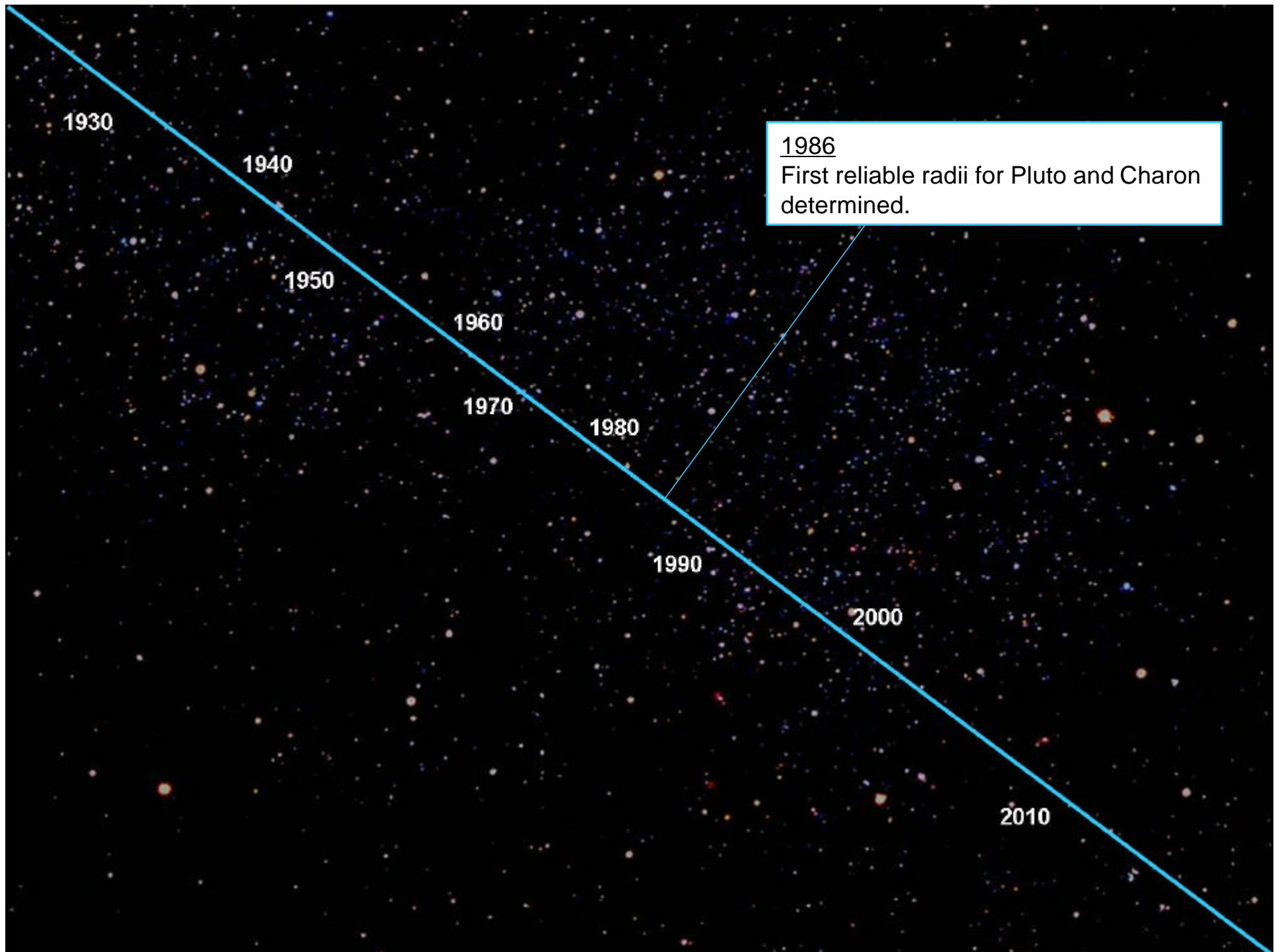
1980

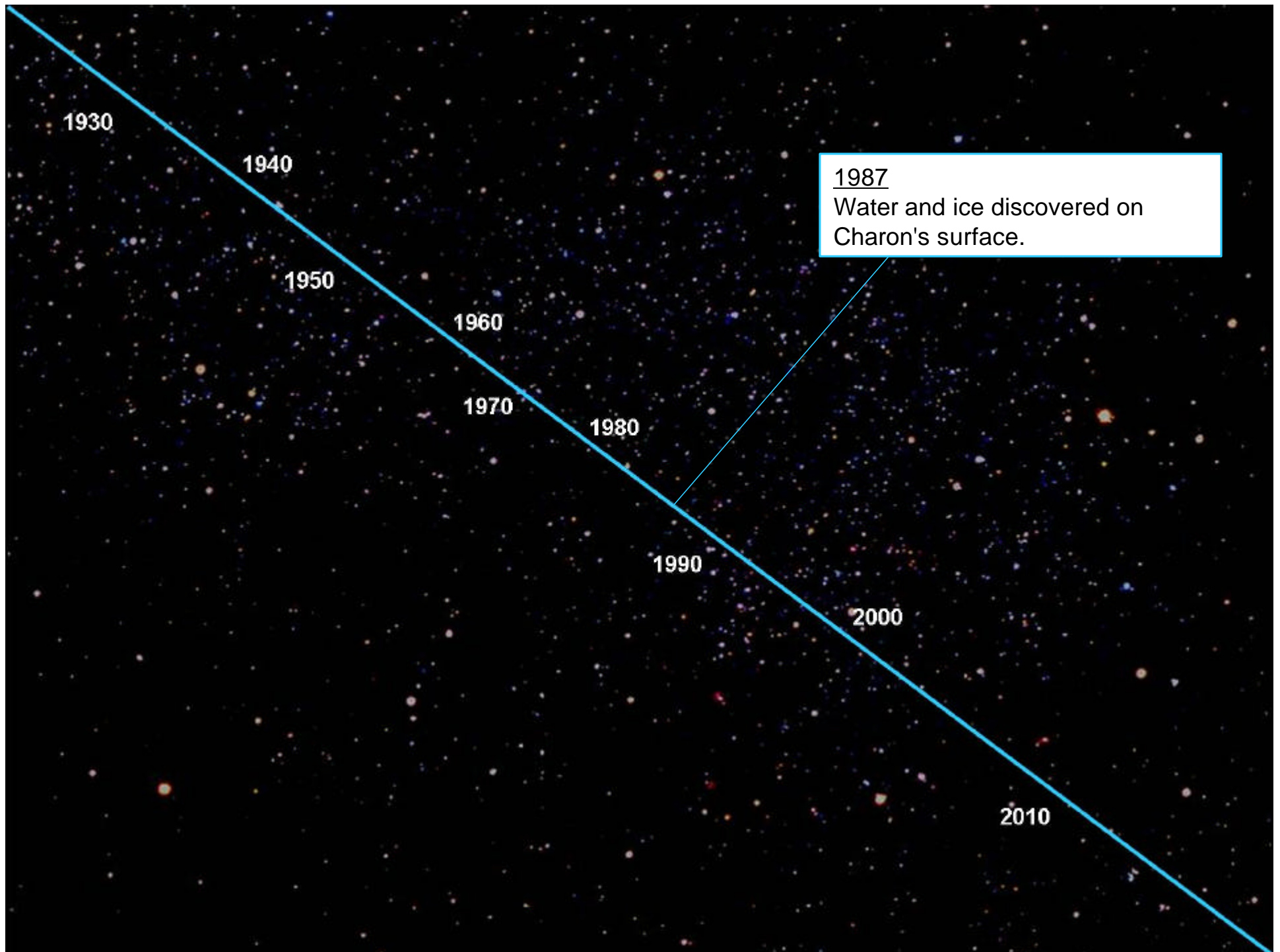
Stellar occultation - observing a star as a planet passes before it - reveals Charon's diameter to be nearly 1,200 kilometers (about 745 miles).

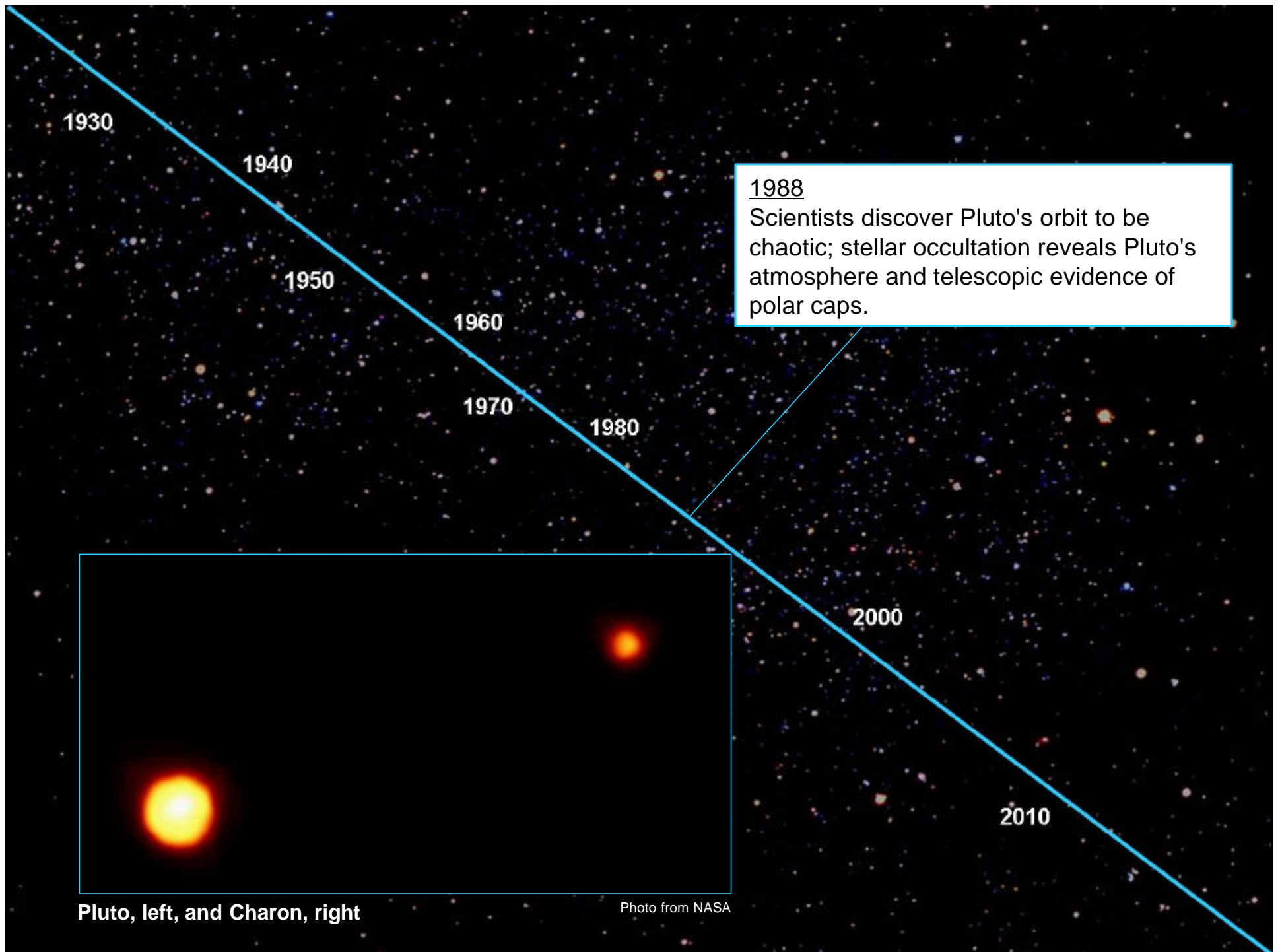


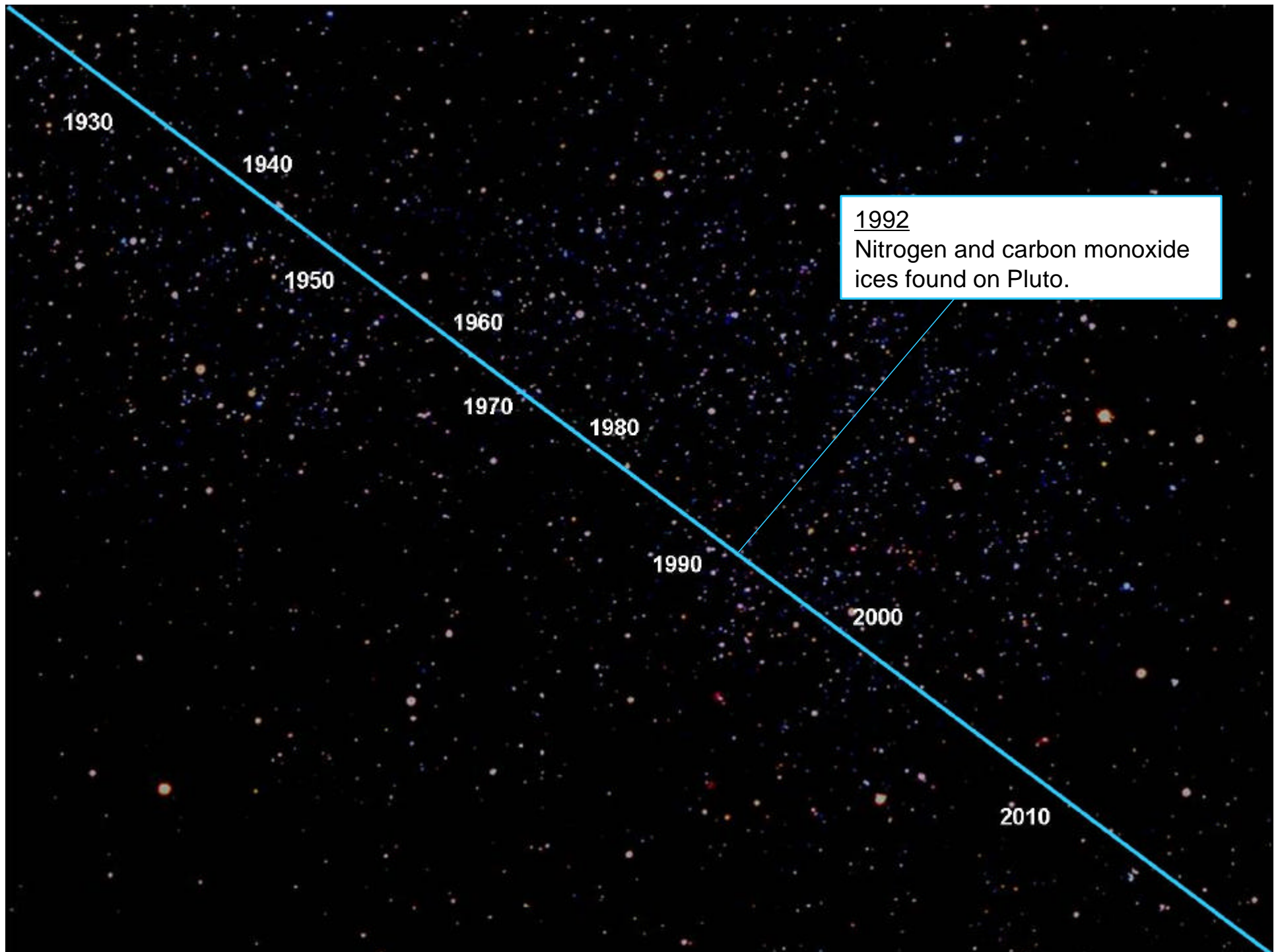
The comet LINEAR

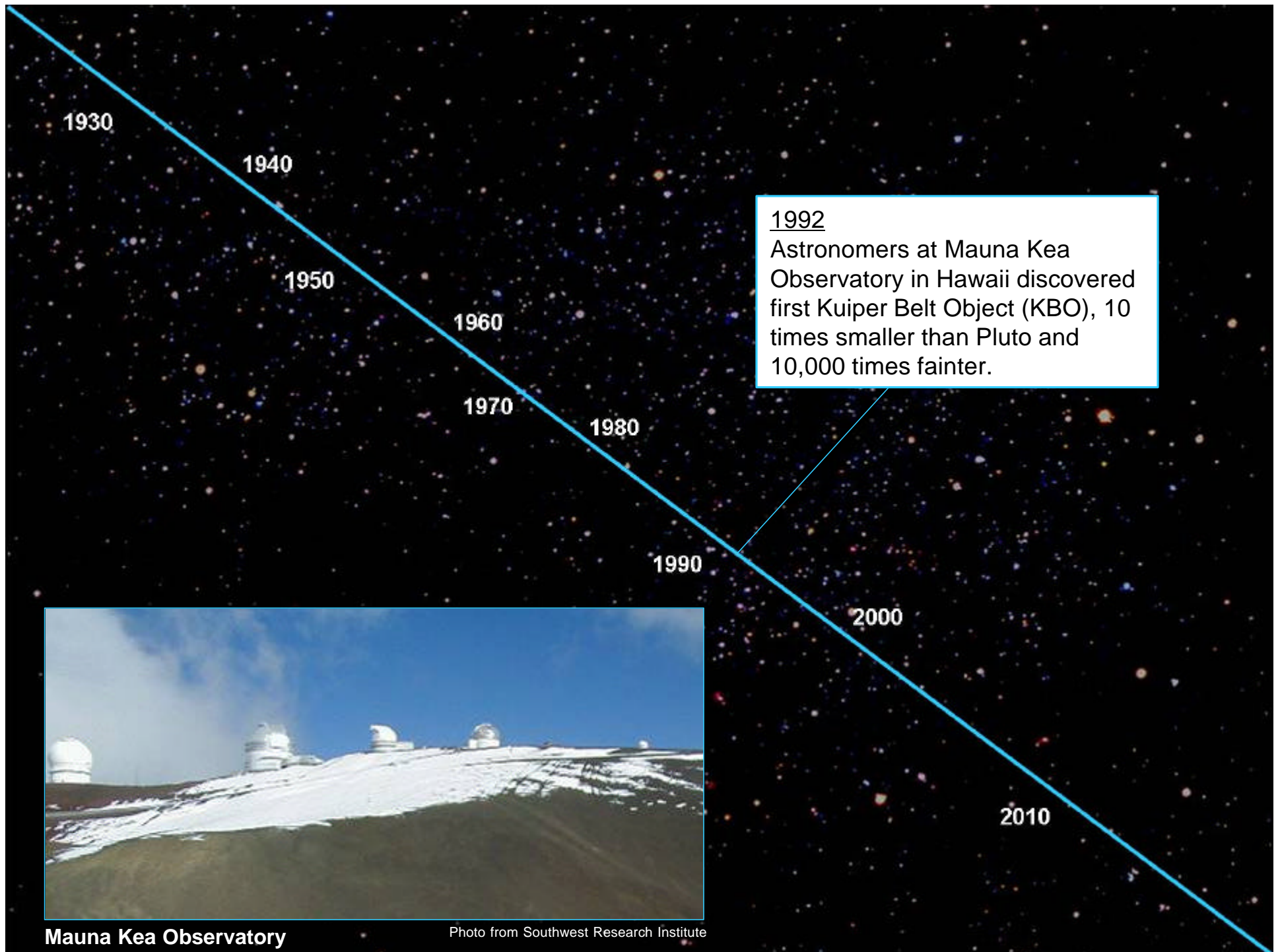
Photo from NASA

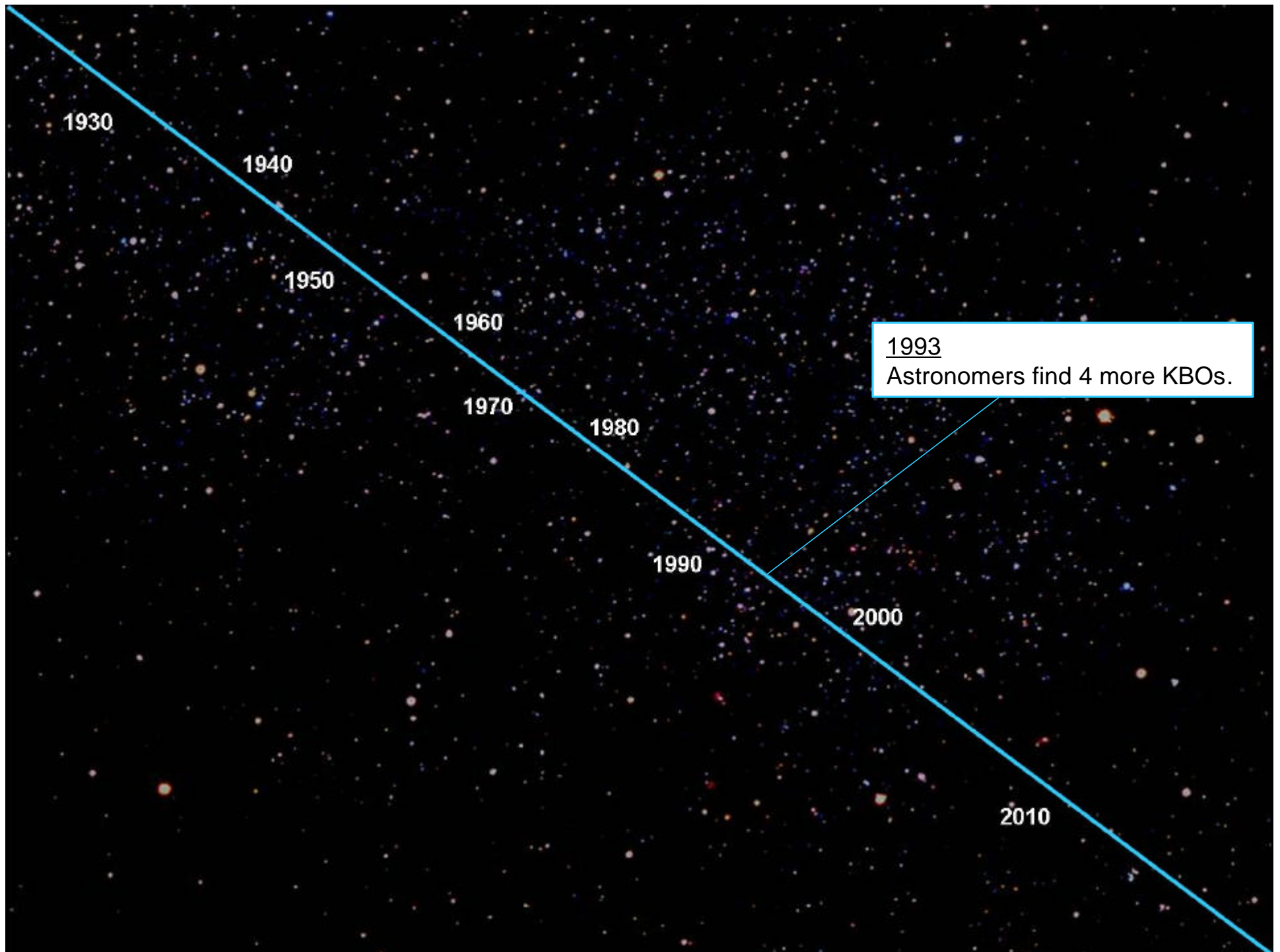


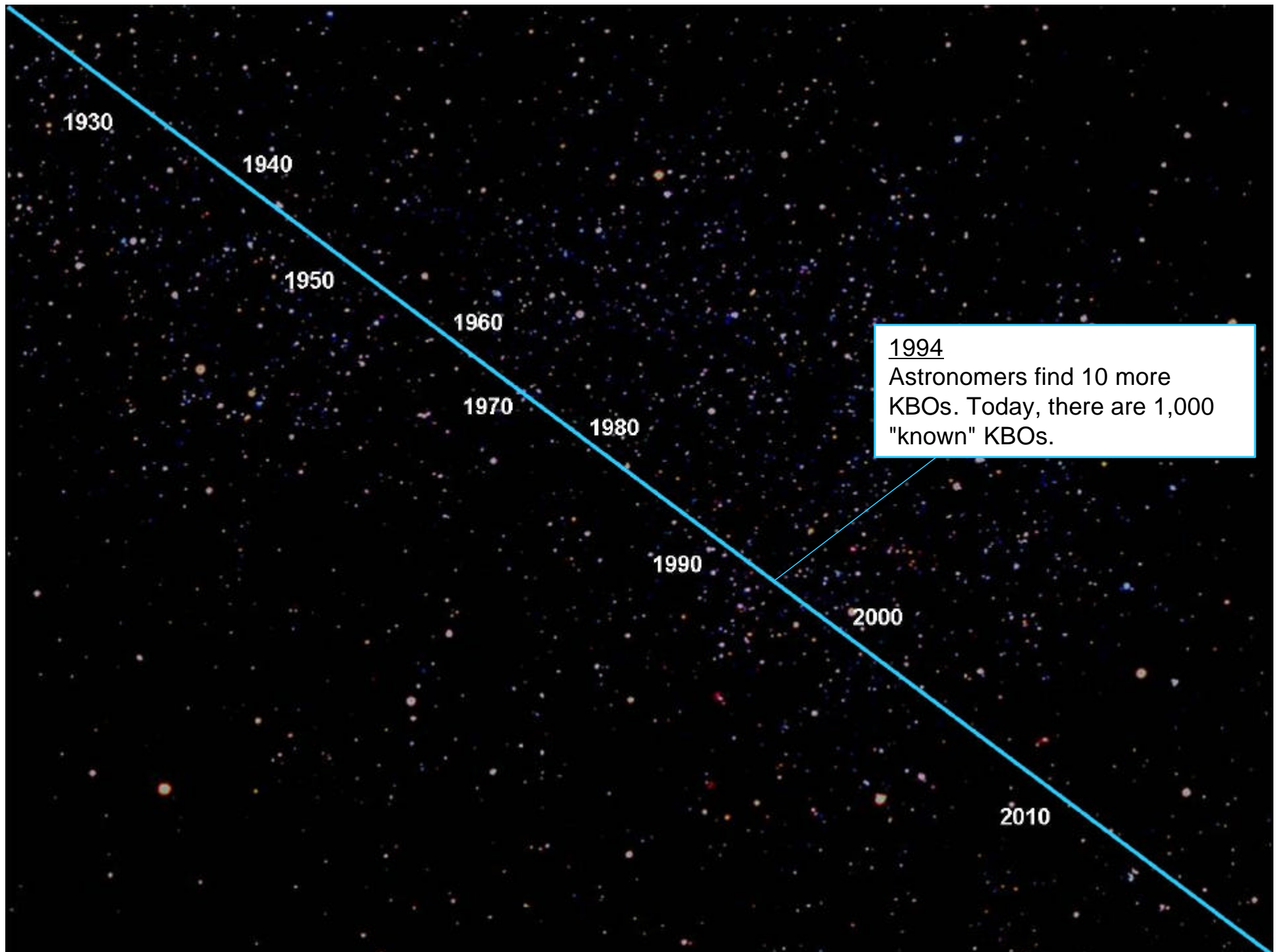












1930

1940



Photo from Southwest Research Institute

Alan Stern above, Hal Weaver below



Photo from Johns Hopkins University
Applied Physics Laboratory

1980

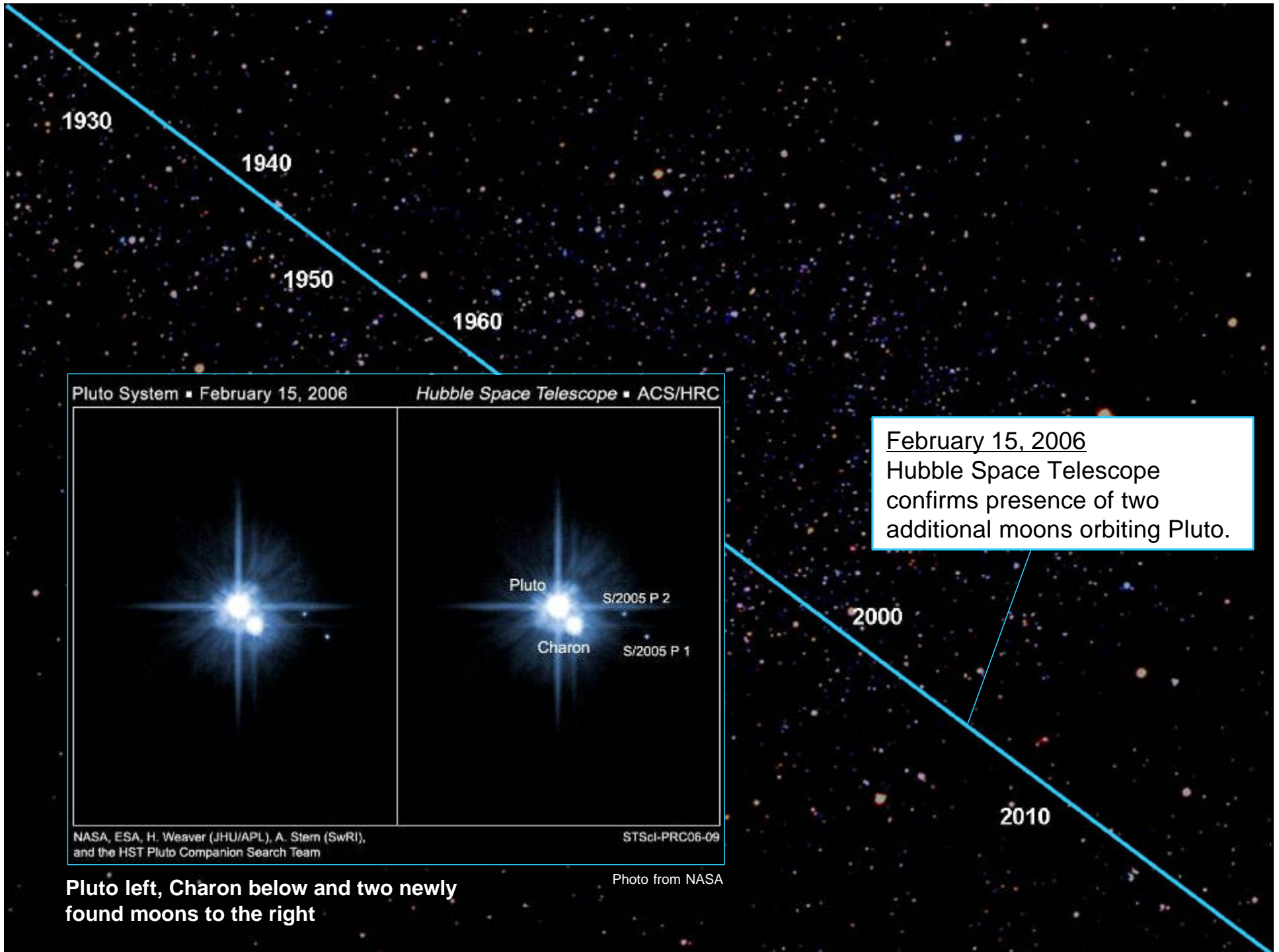
1990

2000

2010

May 2005

Principal Investigator Alan Stern and Project Scientist Hal Weaver lead team to discovering two more moons orbiting Pluto. They are 43,450 kilometers (27,000 miles) away from Pluto.



1930

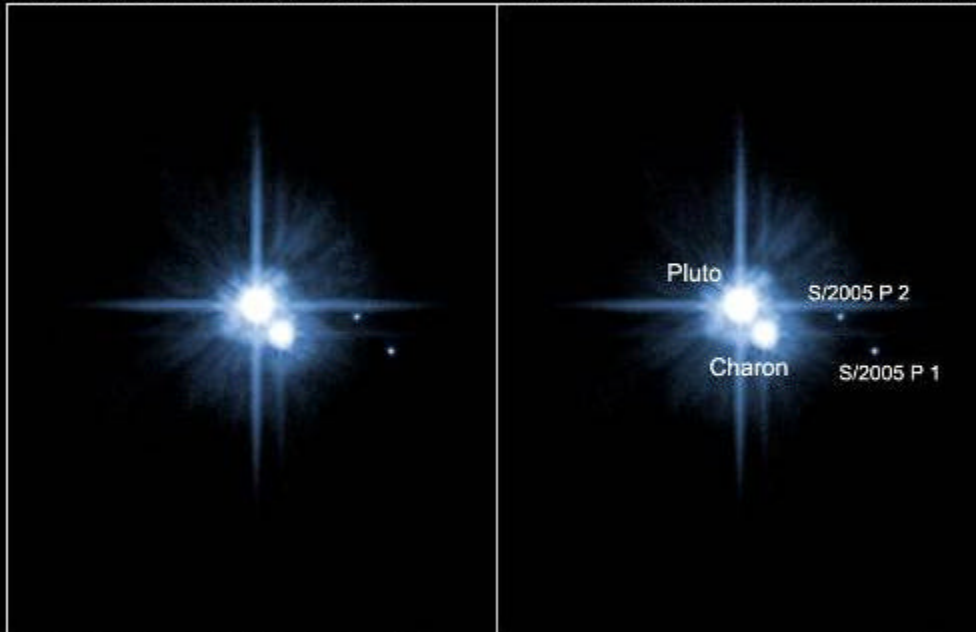
1940

1950

1960

Pluto System ■ February 15, 2006

Hubble Space Telescope ■ ACS/HRC



NASA, ESA, H. Weaver (JHU/APL), A. Stern (SwRI),
and the HST Pluto Companion Search Team

STScI-PRC06-09

February 15, 2006

Hubble Space Telescope
confirms presence of two
additional moons orbiting Pluto.

2000

2010

**Pluto left, Charon below and two newly
found moons to the right**

Photo from NASA